United Nations S/2001/720

Security Council

Distr.: General
23 July 2001

Original: English

Letter dated 17 July 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the final document of the meeting of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the States members of the Central European Initiative, held at Milan, Italy, on 22 June 2001 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Pier Benedetto **Francese**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

01-46496 (E) 240701

Annex to the letter dated 17 July 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States members of the Central European Initiative

(Milan, 22 June 2001)

Final document

1. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the Central European Initiative (CEI) held their annual meeting in Milan on 22 June 2001. The meeting was chaired by H.E. Renato Ruggiero, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Italy which holds the CEI Presidency for the current year.

2. The meeting was attended by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs or their representatives of Albania, Austria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Ukraine and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Representatives of the Council of Europe, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the OECD, the OSCE, AII, BSEC, the Danube Commission, SEECP and SECI attended the meeting in their capacity as special guests. The meeting was also attended by the representative of the Parliamentary Assembly of the CEI and by the Director General of the CEI Executive Secretariat.

3. The Ministers discussed the present situation in the region and its political and economic developments, reaffirming the role of the CEI as an essential instrument of cooperation and stability and its contribution to the consolidation of the democratic, political, economic and social structures in member countries, through the implementation of the CEI strategy and practical activities.

4. They reiterated their will to foster and ensure peace and stability through enhanced cooperation among all CEI countries and by supporting the efforts of the international community in the region. They reaffirmed their support for the CEI function, through cooperation in all fields, of avoiding new dividing lines in Europe. In this context they confirmed their support for the European Union's policy of accompanying the process of its enlargement with the establishment of special relationships for association and stabilization or other forms of special relations.

Political cooperation

5. The Ministers stressed the need to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries in the region and to ensure security in the region not only through the guarantee of border inviolability but also in the broader meaning of assuring sustainable development of the countries of this part of the European continent.

6. The Ministers expressed their serious concern for the threats to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Macedonia in recent months by ethnic Albanian extremist groups, strongly condemning their terrorist acts and armed violence and calling on these groups to stop their actions, to release the hostages, to lay down their weapons and to withdraw immediately from the occupied areas.

They reaffirmed the full support of the CEI to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the borders of the country and the efforts of the new national unity Macedonian Government to end further violence. They welcomed the formation of this Government as a means to address the need for specific reforms as soon as possible and stressed that it is essential to continue to respond to violence only with an appropriate use of force and to continue doing everything possible to avoid civilian casualties. At the same time the Ministers emphasized that it is the acts of the ethnic Albanian extremists that have placed civilians in danger. They also welcomed the mechanism established for the political dialogue under the auspices of President Trajkovski offering possibilities to find solutions aiming at consolidation of inter-ethnic relations and better future of all citizens.

They reiterated the importance of the continuous support provided by the international community and in particular from the countries of the region for isolating those extremist groups and preventing financial, logistic and other kinds of support given to them. In this context, the Ministers stressed the importance of the responsible role played by Tirana in this crisis and encouraged it to continue in this direction. At the same time, they urged all ethnic Albanian leaders, including in Kosovo, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to condemn unambiguously terrorist acts and use their influence to re-establish peace and security.

7. On southern Serbia (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) the Ministers welcomed the return of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia/Serbian forces into the Ground Safety Zone and emphasized the need to continue implementation of confidence-building measures on the basis of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Serbian Government Plan. They expressed the importance for the representatives of the ethnic Albanians and for the Serbian Government to continue the political dialogue.

8. With a view to the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) the Ministers welcomed the efforts of the international community and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNMIK to restore the multiethnic society and ensure all the necessary conditions for elections in cooperation with OSCE/ODHIR in Kosovo, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to be held on 17 November 2001.

The participation of all communities in the elections, the return of refugees and the participation of refugees and displaced persons should be encouraged.

9. The Ministers welcomed the orderly manner in which parliamentary elections in Montenegro, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, were held. In the light of the results of these elections they called for the early resumption of dialogue between the federal and republican authorities, excluding unilateral actions, with a view to a redefinition of the constitutional arrangements within an overall federal framework, in accordance with democratic principles and under conditions that will enhance the regional stability.

10. The Ministers supported the efforts undertaken by the Moldovan authorities, OSCE and mediating States towards finding a complete settlement to the Transnistrian conflict through the elaborating of a special status for the Transnistrian region, based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova.

They underlined the importance of respecting the provisions of the Istanbul Summit documents on the withdrawal of Russian troops from the territory of Moldova.

11. The Ministers reiterate their support for a democratic development in Belarus. In connection with the forthcoming presidential elections they took note of the publicly expressed intention of the authorities of Belarus to guarantee free and fair elections in accordance with international standards.

They stressed that the organization of internationally recognizable free and fair elections in full compliance with the standards and instruments of OSCE Copenhagen documents of June 1990 would represent an important step towards the integration of Belarus in the European processes.

The Ministers stressed the need of continuing cooperation between the Belarusian authorities and the OSCE and its Advisory and Monitoring Group working within its mandate.

12. The Ministers supported the request for the earliest possible accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina and of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the Council of Europe as soon as the appropriate conditions are met.

13. The Ministers expressed their support for the full implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement and for the efforts of the High Representative and the international institutions to that end.

Regional cooperation

14. The Ministers stressed the continuing need for international community assistance towards the stabilization of the region in peace and security as well as towards the strengthening of democratic institutions, market economies and adequate social protection structures aimed at preventing or overcoming situations of poverty and the attendant evils of despair, crime and overall citizens' insecurity which may in turn foster tensions and conflicts at both the national and the international level.

15. The Ministers welcomed and reiterated their support for the continuing EU policy towards the CEI region and its member countries in transition. They welcomed in particular the Stabilization and Association Process and the related agreements respectively signed with Macedonia and initialled with Croatia, to be followed up, it is hoped, by agreements with other countries of the region. They also welcomed the crucial role played by the OSCE, the OECD and the Council of Europe in the region and expressed appreciation for consultations held with them by the CEI Troika and the Financial Committee with the aim of strengthening cooperation and synergies. They called for coordination with the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, SECI and SEECP.

16. The Ministers reiterated their full support for the objectives of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, providing in particular the perspective of integration into the European mainstream and for the programmes undertaken in the areas of cooperation of the three Working Tables, which represent an important contribution to the promotion of democratic consolidation, stability, security as well as economic and social development in the region. The Ministers supported the efforts to

strengthen the Stability Pact's instruments of cooperation and concentration on priority-oriented action.

The Ministers expressed appreciation for the active participation of the CEI and its member countries in the Stability Pact programmes and, in this context, they reiterated their support for the application of the Republic of Moldova to be accepted as a beneficiary country. They also endorsed the interest shown by the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia to be recognized as participants of the Stability Pact. The Ministers expect that the Stability Pact Regional Table scheduled for 28 June will take the respective decisions.

17. They expressed their appreciation for the valuable contribution given to the work of the CEI by the Parliamentary Dimension of the Initiative and they took note of the Final Document adopted by the CEI Parliamentary Committee at its meeting in Rome on 9 March 2001.

CEI programmes and projects

18. The Ministers expressed their appreciation for the progress achieved in the application of the CEI strategy of cohesion and solidarity in its political, economic and cultural activities.

19. The Ministers noted with appreciation enhanced CEI cooperation in the fields of promoting sustainable social, economic and ecological development, infrastructure and private sector investment, SME development, transborder and interregional cooperation (such as the enhanced Szeged Process), human resource development, cultural as well as scientific and technological cooperation (such as the Italian-Slovenian transfrontier television project), including in the field of geodesy, combating organized crime, protection of minorities, women's entrepreneurship and youth affairs. They also expressed their appreciation for the many diverse initiatives and projects undertaken by member countries within the framework of the CEI strategy and Plan of Action.

20. The Ministers welcomed the efforts launched at the Rome Conference on CEI Cooperation (8 and 9 February 2001) to strengthen and streamline the CEI Working Group system in accordance with the amended CEI guidelines and rules of procedure. They also welcomed the contribution of the CEI Executive Secretariat in this process. The Ministers also welcomed the updating by the CEI-Executive Secretariat of the Status report on CEI working groups activities, which provides comprehensive information on the current and planned work undertaken in the framework of the CEI Working Groups.

21. The Ministers welcomed the results of the CEI Conference of Ministers of Justice (Trieste, 26 and 27 March 2001) which by adopting the Trieste Declaration on Judicial Cooperation and Legislative Harmonization launched a programme of particular importance for complementing the multilateral efforts of combating organized crime in the region.

They also welcomed the statement adopted by the CEI Ministers of Agriculture at their meeting in Verona on 12 April 2001 emphasizing their commitment to an agricultural policy oriented towards quality, food safety and environmental soundness.

22. The Ministers expressed their satisfaction for the progress made on several CEI projects and programmes. They noted the continued assistance given by the CEI to the wholesale markets programme and to the Business Advisory Services programme, and welcomed the new technical cooperation project for the Romanian railways. These projects are supported by the Secretariat for CEI Projects, using funds lodged by the Italian Government at the EBRD (CEI Fund).

They noted that the larger investment funds provided by the Bank for these projects and for similar projects in CEI countries are part of an investment strategy which has many points of contact with the CEI strategy.

23. They welcomed the new programme of CEI international events, workshops and training activities in Belarus, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Macedonia, Moldova, Slovenia and Ukraine, which will be co-financed by these countries and the CEI Fund at the EBRD. They noted the link between these programmes, the activities of some of the working groups, and the CEI Summit Economic Forum in Trieste in November, which has the general theme "growing together ... working together on project opportunities for shared socio-economic growth in CEI countries".

24. The Ministers expressed their conviction that the Summit Economic Forum will constitute an important occasion to strengthen the CEI action and capabilities in all the fields of interest to the sustainable development of member countries and of the cooperation among them.

The Ministers stressed the need for all CEI countries and structures to contribute to the success of this Forum by mobilizing their contacts in preparation for and during the Forum, to provide concrete opportunities for economic cooperation.

25. The Ministers agreed that the investment projects, the international events, and the Forum should continue to be supported by the CEI. They expressed their deep appreciation to Italy for its decision to replenish the CEI Fund at the EBRD by a further amount of almost Lit 10 billion (about 5 million euros).

26. The Ministers stressed the positive contribution of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe to the identification, design and implementation of several technical cooperation projects and activities in the CEI countries.

27. The Ministers welcomed the signature on 23 February 2001 of the addendum to the Protocol for Scientific and Economic Cooperation established between CEI and ICS-UNIDO, covering the 2001 shared activities. In particular they took note with appreciation of the results obtained by the Regional Symposium on Sustainable Technological Development in the CEI Countries held in Belgrade from 9 to 19 May 2001. They encouraged the continuation of the related follow-up activities.

Decisions

28. The Ministers decided, in accordance with article 23, paragraph 3, of the CEI guidelines, and upon recommendation of the Committee of National Coordinators, to establish a CEI Cooperation Fund on the basis of the Member States' annual contributions and destined for facilitating the implementation of CEI programmes and projects. They approved the CEI Cooperation Fund Regulations.

29. The Ministers approved the establishment of the Working Group for Interregional and Cross-border Cooperation, co-chaired by Poland and Hungary, and the change of denomination of the Working Group on Reconstruction and Development, co-chaired by Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Ministers also welcomed and approved the transfer of the co-chairmanship of the Working Group on Information and Media from Austria to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The Ministers noted with appreciation the readiness of the Chair countries concerned to promote cooperation in the respective areas among CEI countries.

30. The Ministers mandated the CNC to elaborate the CEI Plan of Action 2002-2003 to be adopted by the CEI Summit in Trieste, taking into account, inter alia, the results of the Forli Conference establishing an academic CEI network and a set of concrete considerations for future cooperation priorities of the CEI.

* * *

31. The Ministers expressed their gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Italy for the excellent organization of the Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the CEI member States in Milan.